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Tapping Techniques: Powerful New Tools for Health

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Tapping techniques are a powerful set of tools being utilized by an increasing number of massage therapists. These techniques can be used to address various conditions, from chronic pain to anxiety-based tension patterns to sports performance.

Tapping techniques are a diverse number of methods that use some form of focused intention combined with light fingertip tapping on specific points—usually acupuncture points, chakras or other energy centers—to move and balance energy in order for the body to heal itself more quickly and effectively.

While techniques abound that use some form of tapping, (see sidebar, "Tapping Links," for a list of some of the major systems), two very different but impressive techniques—Emotional Freedom Techniques and The BodyTalk System—have gained increasing recognition and use.

Bowen bodywork therapist Kevin Minney of San Francisco, California, uses BodyTalk and Emotional Freedom Techniques to help him address clients who have areas of resistance or blockages to healing. Minney looks at the body as an energetic organism, and claims, "Tapping and Bowen [therapy] exist on the same plane. Both methods contact and engage the innate healing mechanism of the body." He says he experiences an 85 percent success rate with his clients using Bowenwork alone, but has found that tapping techniques can "get the body to engage at the energetic block and facilitate the flow of energy," thereby helping clients even more.

Tapping development

Affecting the body's energy through specific points using pressure, acupuncture, laying-on of hands and tapping has been practiced for centuries around the world. The current Western wave of tapping techniques began in 1981 when California psychologist Roger Callahan, Ph.D., introduced his tapping method, Thought Field Therapy. In Susan Courtney's article "Energy psychology: A powerful new paradigm for change," which was featured in the Summer 2002 issue of the periodical Caduceus, Callahan discovered that "the simple act of stimulating a number of acupuncture points while connecting with an unhelpful emotion, thought, impulse or memory can initiate a cascade of healthy neurological, chemical, emotional, cognitive and physical effects."

As a psychologist, Callahan grew increasingly successful at treating his patients' mental and emotional issues with tapping, and eventually he began training psychologists and other professionals. Throughout time, the term Energy Psychology came to be an umbrella term for his method and many other similar techniques that followed. Stanford-trained engineer Gary Craig, one of Callahan's most well-known students, said in his 2005 article "The evolution of EFT from TFT," which is posted on www.theamt.com, that Callahan's discovery of "tapping on the energy system while being tuned to an emotional problem is an extraordinary healing technique that is deserving of the Nobel Prize. Its impact on the healing sciences is bound to be enormous."

However, Craig felt he could generate similar healing results even more easily and "elegantly." He developed Emotional Freedom Techniques, a simplified and streamlined system that made tapping techniques accessible to anyone. Emotional Freedom Techniques moved beyond psychological issues and became increasingly used by anyone who wanted to help themselves and others with physical, mental, emotional and spiritual issues.

Craig's system, which is ever-evolving, teaches people a basic tapping routine, or "algorithm," on a series of acupuncture points that are lightly tapped by the practitioner, or the client, while the client tunes in to an issue and repeats specific phrases to address it. The practitioner verbally guides the clients through the process and can help them determine what issues, memories, beliefs or other causes of energetic imbalance in the meridians need to be addressed.

Common Emotional Freedom Techniques phrases, or affirmations, used while tapping include: "Even though I have (fill in the blank), I love and accept myself fully and completely;" or "Even though I have (fill in the blank), I forgive myself for whatever I may have done to contribute to it, and I love and accept myself fully and completely."

Repeating the affirmation or a shorter reminder phrase and focusing on the issue is believed to bring about energy disruptions in the meridians that hold the issue in place. Tapping on the meridians, like using acupuncture needles, will balance them, and the issue associated with the imbalance will essentially disperse from the person's energy field, bringing rapid, if not instant, reduction in the severity of the problem, according to Craig.

Issues such as pain or fear are rated on a 1 to 10 scale, and the practitioner usually taps until the issue has dropped to a 1 or 0, which can take a few minutes or longer. For issues not immediately resolved, repeated tapping, refining the phrase, adding other issues to the phrase and searching out associated, but different, issues that contribute to the energy imbalance are part of the function of the client and/or the practitioner.

Callahan and Craig's work elicited such amazing results that a floodgate of novel thinking and innovative techniques created by others soon followed, and together these tapping techniques have since been used by tens of thousands of practitioners in multiple disciplines, including massage therapy.

The BodyTalk System

Different methods of tapping techniques have evolved or spontaneously emerged from other sources. One of particular note, literally sweeping across the planet only a few years after its development, is The BodyTalk System, a tapping method developed by Australian chiropractor and acupuncturist John Veltheim. BodyTalk uses a subtle form of muscle testing and a specific series of questions to help the practitioner determine where there is an imbalance in the client's "body-mind complex." An imbalance is analogous to a breakdown in the relationships or communication lines between various parts or aspects of the body-mind complex, according to Veltheim. This breakdown is considered to be the reason why the body-mind has not been able to naturally heal itself.

As the client lies on a massage table, the practitioner uses light muscle testing to connect, or "talk," with the client's innate wisdom. The practitioner then follows a protocol flowchart as a reference tool for muscle testing through a myriad of options in the physical, mental, emotional or energetic realms to determine which option is a priority that needs to be addressed.

Once the priority is established, the practitioner uses the same chart to test for "links" to determine where the lines of communication have been broken. A session may involve finding one or many links and can take mere minutes or up to an hour. It is believed that the body will present the links in the best sequence in which they are to be balanced or repaired, and will also tell the

practitioner when the session is done.

The broken lines of communication are restored between the links by alternately "tapping out" on the head and sternum while the practitioner, and sometimes the client, holds the areas associated to the links. When the relationships between the links are restored, the body will get back to its normal functioning and heal itself, according

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currently the world's No.1 female golfer, credits BodyTalk with helping her fix a nagging hip problem (and dealing with a difficult divorce).

She stated in an article in Golf Digest in February 2006, "I met with doctors after returning to Orlando [in September] and they fixed [my hip], even though it took them four sessions. They used a new therapy called 'BodyTalk' and told me I probably got the problems in my hip because of things I've gone through in my personal life. It was a mental thing that made me fragile in a physical way. All was fine after September. I can swing the clubs like I want now." Massage therapist Lois Bearden, owner of the 40-employee Euro Day Spa & Salon in Orlando, Florida, is a certified BodyTalk practitioner who offers BodyTalk sessions on the menu in her spa. Bearden finds that her massage clients still mostly just want massage, but advertising the offering of BodyTalk sessions drew in new clients. One happy client was so thrilled with his results that he has referred 25 new clients Bearden's way. She says that BodyTalk has helped clients with issues including infertility, sleep disorders, bulimia and pre-surgery anxiety.

"The majority of people I have worked with using BodyTalk are in my age range (late 50s), and are using it for personal and spiritual growth," says Bearden. One of the biggest benefits for Bearden is personal. "I never danced before," she exclaims, "but BodyTalk helped me with left/right brain coordination, and I've since been in a dance competition."

Learning the techniques

The training involved in learning tapping techniques can vary greatly. Emotional Freedom Techniques can be learned at a basic level with a free, 80-page download at www.emofree.com, and there is no formal certification system. More advanced Emotional Freedom Techniques can be learned by watching DVDs or attending workshops. It costs less than \$100 to get two additional advanced instruction kits, including 14 DVDs, a transcript CD and the manual on CD. Craig grants DVD purchasers permission to copy and give away (but not sell) up to 100 copies of his work.

Following Craig's lead, next-generation innovators of tapping techniques have made their work affordable and easily accessible by offering free or low-cost electronic books and DVDs. In addition, entities, such as the Association for Meridian Energy Therapies, publish free e-books that synopsize the latest techniques in "New Meridian and Energy Therapies and Approaches."

With its almost limitless combinations of options to consider on the protocol flowchart, BodyTalk requires a live training. The first training costs about \$1,000 for four days of jam-packed hands-on experience. This training gives enough tools and materials to use BodyTalk with clients, but one must practice a set number of hours and take a practical exam to earn the title of Certified BodyTalk Practitioner.

Advanced trainings feature increasingly specialized knowledge and skills, and are available for practitioners aiming to work with specific issues or populations, such as athletes. BodyTalk Access, a short introductory workshop, is open to the general public to learn simple BodyTalk techniques that don't require the use of muscle testing. This is a great way to learn the potential of this work first-hand before committing to a professional training. The one-day class costs about \$100, and workshop locations throughout the world can be found at www.bodytalksystem.com.

Tapping combined with massage

Adding a tapping technique into a massage practice can range from using a simple, relaxing tapping routine to start the session, to having it become the main modality used.

Massage therapist and certified BodyTalk practitioner Kim Monser of Sonoma, California, has clients that get either massage or tapping, but she says there is a growing demand for combination sessions. Monser often starts her 90-minute combo sessions with 20 to 45 minutes of BodyTalk. The rest of the session is devoted to massage.

"People love their massage and don't want to give that up," says Monser, "but they also love their BodyTalk."

A specialist in injuries and rehab, Monser finds that BodyTalk speeds her clients' recovery faster than therapeutic massage alone. Also, claims Monser, "BodyTalk relaxes them so much that they are so easy to massage. They just melt into it."

Is tapping part of your future? If you are interested in helping your clients at deeper levels and getting results where you may have been stuck before, then explore the emerging trend of tapping techniques. The future of the field is exciting. New techniques are springing up, being tested and presented for others to try. Stories of rapid and amazing healings occur every day, defying old paradigms, logic and beliefs about what is possible for healing the body, mind and spirit.

If you have been searching for new ways to help your clients and lighten the physical demands of your work, you may greatly benefit from including the power of tapping techniques.

Monica Roseberry, H.H.P.E., is the author of Marketing Massage: From First Job to Dream Practice, published by Thomson Delmar Learning. (See the April issue of MASSAGE Magazine for an excerpt from this book.) She is a writer and speaker in the massage and wellness fields. For further information, she can be reached at www.MonicaRoseberry.com.

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to Veltheim.

The appealing aspect of BodyTalk for bodyworkers trained in multiple modalities is that Veltheim has created an all-encompassing protocol system in the flowchart that includes a plethora of Eastern and Western options for assessing where the problems lie. Meridian-based practitioners can use BodyTalk to quickly test for and affect imbalances in the meridians, five elements or the Chinese clock, while Ayurvedic practitioners can use the same protocol chart to test for and resolve problems in the major and minor chakras. Believing that emotions underlie many issues, Veltheim included a box in his protocol flowchart that lets practitioners tap out the energetic imbalances held in place by negative memories and beliefs, but without having to delve into the memories and risk overstepping boundaries or scope of practice.

Musculoskeletal problems respond well to tapping techniques, and BodyTalk has been known to benefit clients with issues that haven't responded to other forms of treatment. Annika Sorenstam,

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